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AUTHOR Haulman, April
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ABSTRACT

Second language teachers wishing to diversify their instructional approach should consider using fairy tales to enrich the experience of the target language and culture. When used well, they can provide a glimpse of the values, lifestyles, customs, and historical traditions of the target language group. Fairy tales also offer a variety of language contexts for expanding and refining vocabulary and for developing a larger repertoire of linguistic structures. Research in second language learning supports the idea that variations of child-oriented themes and/or fantasy can stimulate a young person's interest, simultaneously providing comprehensible input and lowering the affective filter. Suggested steps for using fairy tales in the second language classroom are: (1) introduction of vocabulary and concepts; (2) story presentation using any props or dramatic techniques necessary and available; (3) language activities to practice, review, or extend story vocabulary or structures; (4) reinforcement and follow-up activities such as summarizing and discussion; and (5) use of story language, themes, or topics to integrate with other content area-related activities. (MSE)

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FAIRY TALES IN THE ESL CLASSROOM

April Haulman

Presented at the International Conference on Second/Foreign Language Acquisition by Children (March 29 & 30, 1985 in Oklahoma City)

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FAIRY TALES IN THE ESL CLASSROOM

Teachers of English as a second language (or any second or foreign language, for that matter) wishing to diversify their instructional approach should consider the potential of fairy tales to offer a richness of experience in the target language and culture. There are several lines of reasoning which demonstrate the appropriateness of fairy tales* in the second language classroom.

First of all, when introduced and optimally utilized, fairy tales can provide a glimpse into the values, lifestyles, customs and historical traditions of the target language group. Children can examine how a given group has dressed, how and what they ate, and what they held dear in their day-to-day lives. Since fairy tales, for the most part, evolved as a way of instructing and inculcating the young in the ways and mores of a people, they may offer an understanding of the target group's perception of their environment and their relationship with it. Moreover, fairy tales provide the opportunity for children to explore folk wisdom and perhaps assist in clarification and evolution of their own value systems.

Secondly, children's stories offer a variety of language contexts appropriate for expanding and refining vocabulary, and for developing a larger repertoire of linguistic structures. The storytelling genre, by its very nature, provides ample opportunity to demonstrate role-specific language in many different settings and circumstances. The fairy tale often incorporates both narrative and conversational-

*For my purposes, in this paper, "fairy tale" will refer to a rather broad category of folklore, legends, fables, and othere forms of children's stories incorporating elements of magic and/or fantasy.

interactional styles. Although the specific language of certain stories may seem somewhat out-dated at times (e.g., "porridge"in The Three Bears), or too unusual for everyday usage (e.g., "Fe, fi, fo, fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman" in Jack and the Beanstalk or "not by the hair of my chinny, chin, chin" in The Three Little Pigs), it still can portray the language from many different sociological aspects. A popular discourse structuring device for children's stories is the sequntial build-up of the plot which provides frequent repetition and predictability and thus enhances comprehension. Consider, for example, The Three Bears', "Someone's been eating my porridge," or The Gingerbread Man's "Run, run as fast as you can," or The Little Red Hen's "Who will help me plant this wheat?" and the never-forgotten response "Not I". These examples also highlight the usefulness of fairy tales for focusing on specific linguistic structures (i.e., tenses as in "...been eating..." or questions with "who") or functions, and introducing idiomatic expression in context-embedded situations (e.g., "...and broke it all to pieces" or "...and ate it all up").

The final argument for fairy tales in the foreign/second language classroom is supported by current research in the field of second language acquisition. Krashen (1982, p. 33) states there are two necessary conditions for second language acquisition to occur naturally in the classroom setting: 1) comprehensible input in the target language; and 2) lowered affective filter of the second/foreign language learner. By incorporating variations of child-oriented themes and/or fantasy, fairy tales can pique and maintain a young person's

interest thus affectively engaging the child in the story's content.While focusing on the action, the characters, and the plot, in combination with some repetitive and predictable language and situations, the fairy tale, when creatively introduced, can provide the necessary "comprehensible input" and lower the "affective filter" at the same time. Thus, fairy tales offer a varied medium for cultural, cognitive linguistic, and affective stimulation in a second language classroom.

The following is an outline of suggested steps for the use of fairy tales in the ESL classroom.

1. Introduction

First of all the vocabulary should be introduced and any unusual concepts embedded in the story explained or demonstrated. Also, depending on the level of linguistic ability of the students, motivating statements about the story or the story's lesson, (if it has one) would be an appropriate introductory activity.

2. Story Presentation

After the introduction the story is presented using whatever props and dramatic techniques necessary to make the content enjoyable. This could be done with flannel board, puppets, picture-telling, or even, in some instances, films or filmstrips.

3. Language Activities

Next, activities designed to practice, review, or extend the vocabulary or structures in the story should be presented. Pattern drills, games, songs, worksheets, puzzles, or any activities that provide variations and practice with language are appropriate here.

4. Reinforcement or Follow-up Activities

After manipulating the language of the story children should be given an opportunity to review and summarize the story content or to reinforce the values or story's implications. (E.g., Little Red Riding Hood should not have spoken to a stranger when she was alone in the woods.)

5. Spring Board Activities

The last step is to use the language, themes, or topics of the fairy tale as a spring board to other content area-related activities. While these activities may only be tangentially related to the actual fairy tale they can demonstrate to the ESL student the usefulness and transferability of language to other important subject matter. For language minority students in particular, it is essential to make that connection between language study and academic areas. Spring board activities can be used effectively for math, science, social studies, or extended language or cultural studies. They could include such activities as field trips, guest speakers, science projects, or math problems. The focus will depend on the creativity of the teacher and interests of the students.

Below are listed suggestions for using some familiar, old favorites in the ESL classroom. All but the first presented, i.e., Jack and the Beanstalk, are the result of brainstorming sessions of graduate students studying teaching English as a Second Language at Central State University.

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Suggestions for ESL Instruction Using Fairy Tales

Jack and the Beanstalk

1. Introduction
   a. Vocabulary presented using pictures and explanations: poor, food, cow, beans, beanstalk, giant, wife, gold, harp
   b. Motivation: Have you ever done something your mother told you not to do?
2. Story - Read story from picture book with large, colorful pictures using full voice characterizations.
3. Language Activities
   a. Using picture cards of the cow, beanstalk, and giant, have students sequence them and write or explain each's part in the story.
   b. Make a character pyramid.

(person)	Jack		
(adjective)	young	poor	
(verbs)	sells	climbs	runs

   c. Practice command forms. Students write out simple commands and take turns playing that part.
      - Mother's orders to Jack. (E.g., "Take the cow to town," etc.)
      - Giants orders to his wife.
   d. Pattern/drills to practice comparative.
      adjective, e.g., "The beanstalk grew taller and taller," etc.
   e. Prepare an interview with Jack's mother or giant for their side of the story.

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f. Make a board game with a beanstalk. Each leaf has vocabulary word from the story on it. As students try to reach the treasure up in the sky they must spin and move "Up the Beanstalk." When they land on a leaf they must use the word in a sentence to stay there.

4. Reinforce and Follow-up Activities

a. Students draw pictures depicting the sequence of events.

b. Students dictate to teacher the story or retell in own words into a tape recorder.

c. Students talk about the purpose of the story (meaning, or moral).

5. Spring board Activities

a. Discussion of vocabulary relating to family relationships, e.g., mother, son, husband, wife.

b. Activity relating to the five senses: I see..., I smell (as in I smell an Englishman)..., I hear..., I taste..., I touch (or feel)...

c. Plant beans and watch and record their growth.

<u>The Little Red Hen</u>

1. Introduction

a. Vocabulary: names of farm animals and farm-related vocabulary.

b. Motivation: What do you do to help around your home?

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2. Story Presentation

Use flannel board or puppets to tell the story using animal sounds.

3. Language Activities

a. Tell what sounds the animals make. E.g. "The hen says cluck, cluck."

b. Dramatize the story.

c. Retell the story using different animals.

d. Practice drills using "wh" questions.

e. Sing "The Little Red Hen" song.

4. Reinforcement

a. Make a picture collage of animals on the farm.

b. Play game in which children act out jobs--helping others.

5. Spring Board Activities

a. Make bread, take a field trip to a bakery.

b. Teach about farms and the things they provide.

c. Fieldtrip to a farm recorded on language experience charts.

The Three Little Pigs

1. Introduction

a. Vocabulary: straw, sticks, bricks, pig, wolf, chimney.

b. Motivation: 1) If you were building a house what would you use? 2) Do you ever want to play instead of doing what you know you need to do?

2. Story Presentation

Students listen to dramatic interpretation on tape and follow along in picture book.

3. Language Activities

   a. Sequence pigs in their different type of houses.

   b. Practice ordinal numbers (first, second, and third).

   c. Practice drills with comparatives and superlatives: "the strong, stronger, strongest house."

   d. Discuss other words for house, e.g., home, pad, place, etc.

   e. If you were the man selling the straw (bricks, sticks), how would you convince the pig to buy your product?

   f. Discuss pigs' feelings at different points in the story.

4. Reinforce and Follow-up

   a. Student dramatize the story with props.

   b. Draw a picture of your favorite character or scene in the story.

   c. Students discuss moral: "If you threaten someone you may be your own victim." or "Why do people work? What would happen if they didn't?"

5. Spring Board Activity

   a. Discuss materials used to build houses.

   b. Study different kinds of house around the world.

<u>Cinderella</u>

1. Introduction

   a. Vocabulary Categories:

      1) household work: sweep, wash, dust, scrub, cook, stir, mend, sew, comb hair

      2) family: stepmother, sisters, father, daughter, stepchild, godmother

3) emotions: sad, cry, mean, brag, arrogant

4) clothes: shoes (slippers), gown, rags, apron, skirt, jewelery

b. Motivation: Have you ever felt like you had to work harder than everyone else?

2. Story Presentation

Students watch a filmstrip of the story and then a puppet re-enactment.

3. Language Activities

a. Arrange sentence strips in sequence.

b. Identify commands of stepsisters and stepmother and act them out--also command of fairy godmother.

c. Discuss a picture of Cinderella's family and discuss own family.

d. Talk about Cinderella's feelings at different points in the story.

e. If you had a fairy godmother what would be your wish?

4. Reinforcement

Students tape story for younger students and learn songs from cinderella movie.

5. Spring Board Activities

a. Discuss textures and appearance of different types of cloth (shiny, smooth, rough, etc.).

b. Discuss feelings about not receiving invitations to parties.

c. Discuss parties, e.g., dancing, music, games, different types of parties and different clothing worn.

Reference:
Krashen, Stephen. Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition, New York: Pergamon Press, 1982.